Why Children at Play Signs are Not Recommended

By Andrew Morgan, West Virginia Local Technical Assistance Program

Traffic signs are a key part of our transportation network. They provide information to drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists about the rules of the road such as where drivers must stop and the permitted speed limit. Street name and directional signs help us find our desired destination. When a hazard is present in or near the road, warning signs are there to caution us. Without good signage we might find ourselves lost, in a ditch, or stopped by law enforcement.

Proper signage also helps make communities more liveable and streets safer, something most residents tend to want. Sometimes residents view the street in front of their homes as more than just a place for cars. They may use the road as a walking path, a place to stop and chat with neighbors, or an extension of their front yard where they allow their children to play. Often, residents make requests to road agencies for additional signs which they believe will make their community safer.

One request that many road agencies receive is for “CHILDREN AT PLAY”, “SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY”, or “SLOW CHILDREN” signs. Residents often argue that children play in or near the road, and there needs to be some warning given to drivers. Without these signs, some feel, children are at risk. Based on these arguments alone, it may seem logical that “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs should be installed. However, there are other issues that need to be considered.

Children at Play continued on page 2
The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is a federal manual that has been adopted by the State of Connecticut as law. The intent of the manual is to give roadway agencies a set of standards to help make roads safer. It is the source for when and where a sign should be installed and which sign it should be. The MUTCD does not include “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs or any variation. But why is this? There are many reasons that “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs are not recommended. These are just a few.

- They are typically designed to look like warning signs, diamond shaped and yellow with a black legend. Other warning signs provide information on the specific location of the hazard (pedestrian crossing, curve, etc.). “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs do not give a specific location. They merely tell the driver that kids may be in the road somewhere.
- If you install “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs in some neighborhoods and not others, drivers may be led to believe that there are no children in the areas with out signs, making them more vulnerable.
- “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs give parents a feeling of security in letting their children play in the roads. In fact, no level of signage could ever protect a child should they be hit by a car.
- Studies have shown that “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs do not reduce traffic speeds or make drivers more observant.

Additionally, nearly 30 percent of tort cases filed against roadway agencies pertain to signs. When you install signs not in conformance with the MUTCD, you are increasing your agency’s liability should a child be hit on your roadways.

There are some alternatives that can work in many instances. The playground sign is an appropriate sign alongside parks where children may often visit. Also the pedestrian crossing sign should be used in those locations where children and others frequently cross the road to warn motorists.

It isn’t always easy to say no to residents of your community, but by not erecting “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs, you may actually be making the community safer for everyone.

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Children at Play continued
In December of 2009, The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation’s Highway Safety Office applied for and received a grant to participate in a Federal Pilot program to test the effectiveness of a High Visibility Enforcement model in reducing Distracted Driving and the use of hand-held mobile phones by drivers. The program began to take shape and the first enforcement WAVE was kicked off by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Administrator David Strickland and Connecticut Officials. Currently, the program is nearing its end, with the final enforcement WAVE scheduled for March 26 – April 2nd.

**DDEP Goal and Objectives**

Test whether a high visibility enforcement (HVE) model, similar to CIOT, reduces instances of talking or texting on a hand-held cellular phone while driving. HVE was to be conducted in four separate waves over the course of approximately one year: April 2010, July 2010, October 2010 and March 2011.

- Will the approach persuade motorists not to talk/text on hand-held phones while driving?
- Will law enforcement be consistently able to observe violations and issue tickets?
- Will the approach affect motorists’ perceived risk of being stopped and ticketed for violating the ban?
- Can ongoing public awareness and high visibility enforcement change public attitudes and behavior regarding cell phone use and texting while driving?

**Methodology**

**Evaluation**

- Pre- and post-observations of cell phone use conducted in the Hartford metropolitan area (Stamford and Bridgeport served as control sites)
- Pre- and post-awareness surveys of campaign conducted in the Hartford metropolitan area (Stamford and Bridgeport served as control sites)
- Although not part of the core evaluation plan, CT will make available ticketing data and crash results for additional analysis.

**Enforcement**

- 7-day HVE conducted in the Hartford metropolitan area primarily using targeted enforcement (stationary patrol sites with spotters)
- Multiple enforcement partners: Hartford, West Hartford, and East Hartford PDs; CT State Police (Hartford barracks)

**Funds and In-kind Resources**

- NHTSA Cooperative Agreement - $200,000 in federal funds for enforcement
- CT HSO provided $100,000 in additional funds to support the program
- Ticketholders and law cards for distribution to public
- Roll call training video for law enforcement
- Post WAVE questionnaires and debrief meetings
- Direct technical assistance from NHTSA and SHSOs in monitoring, re-evaluating and guiding demonstration sites on implementation and adjustments to enforcement and outreach strategies.

**Preliminary results:**

**Waves One, Two and Three**

- Wave One citations: 2330 for talking, 272 for texting

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**CT Distracted Driving Evaluation Results**

![Graph showing percentage of phone use by Hartford and Bridgeport/Stamford across waves](image-url)
Distracted Driving continued

- Wave Two citations: 2327 for talking, 18 for texting
- Wave Three citations: 2257 for talking, 58 for texting
- Total of 6914 cell phone citations and 348 texting citations for all three WAVES
- Significant decrease in observed hand-held phone use after first wave, from 6.8% to 4.3 per cent after first WAVE
- Further decrease in observed hand held phone use after second WAVE from 4.6% to 3.1%
- Total decrease in cell phone use for both WAVES- 56%; decrease in texting while driving-68%
- Observed phone manipulation (texting/dialing) decrease after first wave, from 3.9% to 2.7%
- Awareness of distracted driving enforcement rose from 59% to 76% from the beginning of Wave One to the conclusion of Wave Two
- Awareness of PIOH, TITO slogan/logo rose from 5% to 47% after first wave

Lessons learned from Waves One-Three

- Targeted enforcement using stationary patrols and spotters can result in high levels of ticketing
- Public awareness of ticketing for cell phone and texting can be increased within a short period of time.

Extensive community outreach and public education needed between WAVES to create and “enforce” new social norms.

Anecdotal evidence that some motorists even after ticketing may not be getting message-law enforcement reports ticketing repeat offenders during WAVES 2 and 3.
Technology Transfer Center Kicks Off the New Connecticut Transportation Leadership Program

We are very pleased to introduce the members of our first class:

Justin Andrews  
Town of West Hartford

Russell Arnold  
Town of Farmington

Douglas Boelter  
Town of West Hartford

Larry Bonin  
Town of Old Saybrook

Joe Bragaw  
Town of Stonington

Mark Carlino  
Town of Manchester

Scott Clairmont  
Town of Windham

David DeNoia  
City of New London

Stephen Holliday  
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Thomas H. Hughes  
City of Danbury

Kevin Kelly  
Town of Colchester

Tiger Mann  
Town of New Canaan

Stephen Matos  
ConnDOT - District 2

Brian Mitchell  
Town of West Hartford

David Null  
City of Danbury

Paul Pronovost  
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Karl Reichle  
Town of South Windsor

Patricia Standish  
Town of West Hartford

Scott Tharau  
Town of Burlington

William B. Watkins  
City of New London

John Winterberger  
Town of West Hartford

Scott Zenke  
Town of Farmington

Save the Date!  
2011 Technology Transfer Expo – September 21, 2011
Roadway departures account for more than half of fatal crashes nationwide. One cause of crashes following roadway departures, especially on rural two-lane roads, is pavement-edge dropoff, the uneven and sometimes vertical edge between the paved travel lane and the unpaved shoulder.

What is the Problem?
When a vehicle leaves the pavement and straddles the unpaved shoulder, the vertical edge can make it difficult for a driver to safely reenter the paved travel lane. In some cases, drivers attempting to return immediately to the paved roadway oversteer and lose control of their vehicles.

The resulting crashes tend to be more severe than other crash types, sometimes resulting in vehicles overturning or hitting an oncoming vehicle. Or the vehicle may cross the lane and run-off the other side of the road and hit a fixed object or overturn on a slope.

The problem of pavement-edge dropoff begins at the time of conventional construction. The additional asphalt creates a vertical edge until the unpaved shoulder is regraded flush with the pavement. But within about 2 months or so the unpaved shoulder begins to settle or erode, exposing the vertical pavement edge once again. The new exposed pavement edge may also start to crumble and break off.

What is the Solution?
A relatively easy and inexpensive countermeasure to pavement-edge dropoffs is to change the way the edge of the pavement is constructed. Studies have shown that creating a 30-degree angled wedge at the pavement edge eliminates tire scrubbing, making it easier for motorists and cyclists to safely recover after encountering a dropoff. This angled edge is called the Safety Edge. It can be installed along the pavement edge during any paving project. A special, commercially available attachment or shoe is bolted to the paving machine. The shoe acts as a screed extension and extrudes the asphalt, forming a durable pavement edge at a 30-degree wedge shape. Installing the Safety Edge adds little or no cost to pavement projects.

The Safety Edge Provides Several Benefits:
• Improved safety for motorists and cyclists
• Easy to install at very low or no cost
• Creates a stronger and more durable pavement edge

For More Information
Frank Julian
Federal Highway Administration
Safety & Design Team
(404) 562-3689
Frank.Julian@dot.gov

Chris Wagner
Federal Highway Administration
Pavement & Materials Team
(404) 562-3693
Christopher.Wagner@dot.gov

The Problem – The diagram at left shows what happens when a driver encounters a pavement-edge dropoff. After intense tire scrubbing occurs, drivers attempting to return immediately to the paved roadway can over-steer and lose control of their vehicles.

The Solution – A 30-degree angled pavement edge, called the Safety Edge, is shown here in the main photo immediately after construction. After the unpaved shoulder is regraded flush with the pavement, shown in the inset photo, the Safety Edge creates a more durable pavement edge and makes recovery from any future dropoff much easier and safer.
**2011 National Work Zone Awareness Week**
April 4-8, 2011

Safer Driving
Safer Work Zones
For Everyone

For more information, please visit:
www.workzonesafety.org/news_events/awareness_week/2011

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**Go Orange for Work Zone Safety**

Please join us in supporting the men and women across Connecticut that are working to improve our highways, roadways and streets by Going Orange for Work Zone Safety Week, April 4-8, 2011. Help us encourage everyone to pay attention in work zones and help save lives. Encourage your co-workers, other departments in your organization and your families, friends and neighbors to Go Orange for Work Zone Safety during the week of April 4 - 8.

You can Go Orange by wearing orange clothing, painting your face, or hanging an orange ribbon on your house or mailbox. Be creative, have fun, and show your support. Tell us why you are Going Orange and send us some pictures of you, your crews and your family supporting work zone safety by Going Orange. Send an email and/or photos to Mary McCarthy at mary@engr.uconn.edu

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**New England APWA Chapter Update**

APWA & New England Chapter Events (See also the Calendar on the Chapter’s Web Page: newengland.apwa.net or APWA’s Web Page: www.apwa.net

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<td>1-Day Supervisors Training Seminar</td>
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<td>Apr 2</td>
<td>Congress Volunteer Appreciation Dinner</td>
<td>Worcester, MA</td>
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<td>Apr 14</td>
<td>Spring Meeting &amp; Exec Comm Mtg</td>
<td>Westbrook, CT</td>
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<td>May 15-21</td>
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<td>May 18</td>
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<td>June 17</td>
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<td>Sep 17-21</td>
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<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Fall Meeting &amp; Exec Comm Meeting</td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
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<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>Exec Comm Mtg/Strategic Planning</td>
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<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>Holiday Exec Comm Mtg</td>
<td>Worcester, MA</td>
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**Connecticut Celebrates Earth Day!**
April 22, 2011

For more information and a calendar of Earth Day Events in Connecticut, please visit the Department of Environmental Protection:

tinyurl.com/EarthDayCT
Technology Transfer Center Request Form

_____ Please change my address/contact information as indicated below.

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I would like to see a future newsletter article on the topic of: _________________________

I would like to suggest the following future training topics be offered by the T2 Center:

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I would like to request the following informational resource materials:

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Please fax a copy of this form to (860) 486-2399 or mail to:

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